

# AH235 Reframing Museum Collections

Seminar Leader: Jenny Dirksen

Course Times: Thursdays, 15:45-19:00

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 11:00-13:00

## Course Description

Throughout the past two decades, a history of art hitherto defined by an almost exclusively North-Atlantic perspective has been slowly broadening its horizons. As a consequence, art-historical narratives are now being generated that are informed by critical theory and postcolonial studies. These new approaches move away from the Western canon toward a more global art history. Collection displays of museums have been resistant to such a development for a long time. How can a museum frame its holdings in such a way as to critically reflect upon the art narratives it presents? What special challenges might a museum of modern art face? How could radical changes in outlook affect not only the display of collections, but also an institution's understanding of art and of its own trajectory? The course addresses these questions by taking as an example the Nationalgalerie of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and its 18th-21st century art collections. For more than two years, the institution has been working on the project "Hello World. Revising a Collection," researching its own history and holdings. A preliminary visit to the exhibition of the same title is encouraged (28 April to 26 August, 2018, Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin). The course includes off-campus visits to some of the displays and depots of the Alte Nationalgalerie, Neue Nationalgalerie, Museum Berggruen, Sammlung Scharf-Gerstenberg and Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin.

## Requirements

### Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than one absence (e.g. one double session) will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

If absent, please send a short notification via email, if possible before the beginning of class. Punctuality is essential. Please note that the use of smartphones and notebooks is not allowed during seminars on and off-campus. Students are advised to consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

### Assessment

Students will be evaluated based on the overall seminar work. Each student will be asked to prepare a short oral presentation intended to introduce the scheduled reading or the off-site venue. The presentations will be assigned during the first class. Together with overall attendance and participation in discussions they will contribute one part of the course assessment, the other is comprised by the writing assignments (see also 'Grade Breakdown').

### Course Material

The course material will be available digitally via google classroom, and also in printed form.

### Writing Assignments

There are two essays for this course, one mid-term essay (ca. 2500 words) and one longer final essay (ca. 3500 words). A range of prompts will be provided in advance.

The mid-term essay is due **21 October**, midnight.

The final essay is due **20 December**, midnight.

Essays should include references, bibliography and a list of illustrations. The structure and draft of your essay can be discussed in individual tutorials.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

(From the Student Handbook on the submission of essays)

## Grade Breakdown

Seminar Grade: 50% (attendance and participation in discussions 30%, presentations 20%)

Essay 1: 20%

Essay 2: 30%

## Schedule

Week 1

**06.09.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Introduction

Reading:

Kristian Vistrup Madsen: *What Would a 'Clean' Art Collection Look Like?*, in: *Frieze*, 29 May 2018,

<https://frieze.com/article/what-would-clean-art-collection-look>

Will Furtado: *Hello World: Complicating Notions of „Global Art“*, in: *Contemporary&*, 2 August 2018,

<https://www.contemporaryand.com/de/magazines/hello-world-complicating-notions-of-global-art/>

Week 2

**13.09.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Introduction

Reading:

Jenny Dirksen: *Review and Visibility. The Boundaries and Borders of the Nationalgalerie Collection*, in: *Hello World. Revising a Collection*, exh.-cat. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Udo Kittelmann / Gabriele Knapstein (eds), Munich 2018, 63-70.

Week 3

**20.09.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Museum visit Alte Nationalgalerie

Reading:

Edward W. Said: *Introduction*, in: idem, *Orientalism*, London 1978, 1-30.

Week 4

**27.09.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Museum visit Museum Berggruen

Reading:

T.D.M.: *The United States Government and Abstract Art*, in: *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, Vol. 3, No. 5, 1936, 2-6.

Week 5

**04.10.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Museum visit Sammlung Scharf-Gerstenberg

Week 6

**11.10.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Storage visit Neue Nationalgalerie

Week 7

**18.10.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Museum visit Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin

Reading:

Katarzyna Cytlak: *La rivoluzione siamo noi. Latin American Artists in Critical Dialogue with Joseph Beuys*, in: *Third Text*, Vol. 30, Issue 5-6, 2016, 1-22.

Week 8

**25.10.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Seminar discussion: global art history and museums of modern art

Monica Juneja: *Global Art History and the "Burden of Representation"*, in: Hans Belting / Jakob Birken / Andrea Buddensieg (eds), *Global Studies: Mapping Contemporary Art and Culture*, Stuttgart 2011: 274-297.

Fall Break

**29.10.-04.11.2018**

Week 9

**08.11.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Seminar discussion

Conversation with Sven Beckstette, Curator Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin

Reading:

Sven Beckstette and Azu Nwagbogu in Conversation: *Colomental*, in: *Hello World. Revising a Collection*, exh.-cat. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Udo Kittelmann / Gabriele Knapstein (eds), Munich 2018, 355-359.

Week 10

**15.11.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Seminar discussion: global art history and museums of contemporary art

Reading:

Hito Steyerl: *Can the Subaltern speak German? Postcolonial Critique*, trans. Aileen Derieg, *transversal*, Vienna: eipcp, May 2002; repr. in *Musen und Mythen 10*, Sigrid Haase (ed), Berlin: University of the Arts, 2003, 121-129; repr. in Steyerl, *Beyond Representation*, 2016, 204-207.

Week 11

**22.11.2018, Thursday**

Seminar discussion: global art history, art collections and ethnographic collections

Week 12

**29.11.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Seminar discussion

Conversation with Anna-Catharina Gebbers, Curator Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin

Reading:

Anna-Catharina Gebbers: *Making Paradise. Image-Building from the Age of Imperialism to Indonesia's Present*, in: *Hello World. Revising a Collection*, exh.-cat. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Udo Kittelmann / Gabriele Knapstein (eds), Munich 2018, 115-122.

Week 13

**06.12.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Exhibition visit “How to talk with birds, trees, fish, shells, snakes, bulls and lions” at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin

Reading:

<https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/hamburger-bahnhof/exhibitions/detail/how-to-talk-with-birds-trees-fish-shells-snakes-bulls-and-lions.html>

Week 14

**13.12.2018, Thursday, 15:45-19:00**

Wrap-up Session

Week 15

Completion week